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EXAMINER

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3629

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PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/839,697

Applicant(s)

LOWRANCE ET AL.

Examiner

Janice A. Mooneyham

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 March 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 3-20 and 22-40 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 3-20 and 22-40 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. This is in response to the applicant's communication filed on March 15, 2007, wherein:

Claims 1,3-20, and 22-40;

Claims 1, 20, and 39-40 have been amended.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

2. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on March 15, 2007 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. Claims 1, 3-20, and 22-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention.

Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 20, 39 and 40 to include the essentially the following language (in italics and bolded) in the amendment submitted on March 6, 2006 and in the amendment submitted on September 25, 2006. The prior

amendments and the amendment submitted on March 15, 2007 include the following language:

receiving supporting evidence from said user in response to said one or more of the selected template questions;

associating said supporting evidence with said answers 9with at least one of the one or more answers) to said template questions;

generating a new argument supporting a [an associated] conclusion, the argument **comprising the selected template, the associated answers, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion**

(claims 39-40) form a new argument supporting a conclusion, the argument **comprising the selected on of said template, the one or more answers, the supporting evidence and the conclusion;**

publishing said new argument including said answers, said supporting evidence and said associated conclusion for review.

The claim language *associating the supporting evidence with said answers and generating a new argument having an associated conclusion based on such answers and supporting evidence* can be interpreted to mean that a user request the supporting evidence and then makes a determination as to which argument to pursue next based on the supporting evidence and the answer to the previous question. The invention would merely organize the questions and any attached evidence to lead the user through the decision process. However, if the computer somehow takes the associated evidence and generates a new argument, the Examiner asserts that this is not

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described in the specification in such a way as to enable one of ordinary skill to make or use the invention.

Furthermore, in response to the Examiner's rejection, the applicant submitted the following amendment to the claims on September 25, 2006:

receiving supporting evidence from said user in response to said one or more of the selected template questions, ***the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the answers;***

generating a new argument ***supporting*** an associated conclusion, ***the argument being*** based on such answers.

This language still allows the user to make a determination based on supporting evidence and the user (outside of the computer) using the evidence to form at least one answer. However, if the computer somehow takes the associated evidence and processes it to generate a new argument, the Examiner asserts that this is not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one of ordinary skill to make or use the invention.

The applicant's specification discloses:

[0053] One or more of the answers may include documentary evidence, e.g., 532a and 532b. Other answers may include other types of supporting evidence. For example, an answer may be supported with a critical path analysis 508 or a query structure 510. One or more of these supporting evidence structures may also include documentary evidence, e.g., 534.

[0062] After the user selects one or more answers 608, the user may associate one or more rationale for choosing such answers. The rationale generally includes the user's or users' reasons for selecting his or her answers to the associated question. The user may also associate documentary evidence 612 that support his or her answers to the associated question.

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[0073] One or more discovery tools may be selected and used in operation 712. FIG. 6 shows discovery tools 616 being associated with question 606. Answers to one or more questions of the selected template may then be selected in operation 714. FIG. 6 illustrates answers 608 that are presented for question 606. In this illustration, the user has selected two answers by clicking on two selection buttons 609. **Exhibits or documentary evidence may also be associated with one or more questions in operation 714. Additionally, previous exhibits may be promoted to evidence.** FIG. 6 illustrates documentary evidence 612 and exhibits 614 associated with question 606.

[0074] **Each question may have more than one piece of supporting evidence.** FIG. 12 illustrates a question having two pieces of associated documentary evidence 1202. **Each piece of evidence may result in a different answer for the associated question.** As shown, each piece of answer has a different set of answers selected.

[0075] A fusion method 1204 may also be selected for **multiple pieces of evidence** in operation 718. The default fusion method is a manual fusion method, **where the user must select the answer based on the supporting pieces of evidence.** The fusion method is similar to the above described inference method associated with questions. Both the fusion and inference methods determine how answers are combined into a single answer. The fusion method determine how the separate answers formed for each piece of evidence are combined into a single answer to a particular question, while the inference method determines how children answers are combined to form an answer for a higher level parent question. In both methods, the answers may be averaged together, a minimum answer may be selected (most negative outcome) or a maximum answer may be selected (most positive outcome). As shown, the maximum fusion method is selected In the above described red-green color scheme, the answer having the most red shaded lights is used for the final answer in the maximum method and the answer having the most green shaded lights is used for the final answer in the minimum method.

While the Examiner asserts that applicant's disclosure supports an argument with supporting evidence and that a user may associate evidence supporting an answer, and wherein the user may select and answer based on the supporting evidence, the Examiner does not find support for a new argument supporting an associated conclusion, the argument comprising the selected template, the associated answers, the supporting evidence and the associated conclusion. If there is support for this

limitation, the Examiner respectfully request that the applicant direct the Examiner to the disclosure providing this support.

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 1, 3-20, and 22-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Applicant changed the claim language from "generating a new argument supporting a conclusion, comprising the selected template, the associated answers, the supporting evidence and the associated conclusion". It is not clear what applicant is trying to claim with this added limitation. It is understandable that the next argument or set of questions are based on the response to the previous argument. However, how can a new argument comprise a selected template? Is this a whole new template selected by the user? It is not clear why the new argument would comprise the previous template, the previous answers, the previous supporting evidence and the previous conclusion. It is unclear to the Examiner what this limitation means.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

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(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1, 3-14, 17-20, 22-33 and 36-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Calver (2001/0032092) (hereinafter referred to as Calver) in view of Janssen (6,098,062) (hereinafter referred to as Janssen).

Regarding Claim 1:

Calver discloses an analytical system for facilitating decision making given a situation by generating and accessing arguments (arguments are interpreted as being questions based on answers to previous questions) **wherein each argument** (question) **has an associated conclusion as to whether a situation** (product or service) **will likely have a negative or positive result** (information useful in determining whether service providers would (positive) or would not (negative) benefit the customer's business (page 7 [0082]), **the analytical system comprising:**

a database (Figure 2 (50) and page 11 [0127]) **for** storing a plurality of templates (Figure 4 (98), forms page 4 [0052], criteria Figure 14 (242)) that each include a plurality of questions which when answered to generate a particular argument (question based on answer) having an associated conclusion (solution/ recommendation) regarding a particular situation (product or service) that is based on answers to its associated template questions (Page 5 [0063] new questions based on previous answers); and

a server ((88) page 4 [0049-0051 and 0053], Figure 5) comprising **means for selecting** one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation (process is generally driven by one or more questionnaires, each preferably followed by

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increasingly targeted information to match specific business interest (page 5 [0060]); **means for receiving** input to one or more of the selected template's questions and **means for generating a new argument** (question based on answer) having an associated conclusion (solution/recommendation) based on such answers (page 5 [0063] new questions based on previous answers), the associated conclusion indicating whether the situation will likely have a positive or negative result (page 7 [0084])informing the customer whether services are beneficial to his or her business (positive); (information useful in determining whether service providers would (positive) or would not (negative) benefit the customer's business (page 7 [0082])).

associating supporting evidence to each answered template question (page 6 [0071] pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include....).

The applicant is advised that Calver discloses a system with a database and a server. The intended use of the structure is generally given little patentable weight and thus does not distinguish the system from the prior art. An apparatus/system must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function alone (MPEP 2114). The database and server of Calver are fully capable of performing the functions as set forth in the claim language.

While Calver discloses a customer being presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers [0084], Calver does not

explicitly disclose a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers

However, Janssen discloses an invention that provides a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers (*a program and method for facilitating decision-making, and more particularly, the present invention relates to a computer program, system, and method that accepts inputs that bear on a decision in a structured format from a plurality of sources and arranges the inputs in a hierarchical structure that permits an evaluation of the inputs as they relate to the decision (col. 1, lines 14-20); a system and method that can facilitate decision-making, particularly when the decision-making utilizes for support a large number of sources. It is a further object, to provide a method wherein scientific assessment can be effectively utilized in a decision-making process. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating a decision-making process comprising a computer program that causes linkage of data representing a plurality of argument structure units into a hierarchical argument structure. Each argument structure unit comprises data corresponding to a hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to grounds that provide a basis for inference of the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to a warrant linking the grounds to the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, and data corresponding to backing that certifies the warrant. The hierarchical argument structure comprises a top level argument structure unit and a plurality of subordinate level argument structure units. Each of the plurality*

of subordinate argument structure units comprises at least a portion of the grounds of the argument structure unit to which it is subordinate. Program code located on each of a plurality of remote computers accepts input from one of a plurality of contributors. Each input comprises data corresponding to an argument structure unit in the hierarchical argument structure and supports the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis. A second programming code is adapted to combine the inputs into a single hierarchical argument structure. A third computer program code is responsive to the second computer program code and is adapted to represent a degree of support for the hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis in the single hierarchical argument structure (col. 6, lines 25-61).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to incorporate into the decision support system of Calver the evidence generating taught in Janssen so that arguments being put forth by experts can be effectively captured with the grounds (data with references) upon which conflicting claims of the experts are based and with the claims properly lined to the supporting data so as to aid in making sound policy decision.

Regarding Claim 20 and 39

Calver discloses a method and medium containing program instructions (software module page 9 [0100]) for accessing or generating an argument (questions based on previous answers) having a conclusion (solution) for a particular situation

(web-based solutions page 4 [0054], provides products and solutions), **the method comprising:**

searching a plurality of templates (Figure 4 (98) filling out of forms (page 4 [0052]) /lead generation (page 5 [0060]) pre-qualifying templates (page 5 [0061], Figure 14 (242) criteria) **for a relevant template most related to a particular situation** (Figure 12 (214) industry/business/product information), **wherein each template includes a plurality of questions** (Figure 12 (216) general questions, page 5 [0060] questionnaires); and

answering one or more questions of the relevant template to form a new argument (question based on answer) **having a conclusion** (solution (page 4 [0054]) and resulting information (page 7 [0084] informing customer of services by various providers and whether such services are beneficial to his or her business) **based on the one or more answers** (page 5 [0062-0062] The Product Configurator dynamically presents the user with new questions based on previous answers); and

associating supporting evidence to each answered template question (pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include....).

While Calver discloses a customer being presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective provides [0084], Calver does not explicitly disclose a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers

However, Janssen discloses an invention that provides a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers *(a program and method for facilitating decision-making, and more particularly, the present invention relates to a computer program, system, and method that accepts inputs that bear on a decision in a structured format from a plurality of sources and arranges the inputs in a hierarchical structure that permits an evaluation of the inputs as they relate to the decision (col. 1, lines 14-20); a system and method that can facilitate decision-making, particularly when the decision-making utilizes for support a large number of sources. It is a further object, to provide a method wherein scientific assessment can be effectively utilized in a decision-making process. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating a decision-making process comprising a computer program that causes linkage of data representing a plurality of argument structure units into a hierarchical argument structure. Each argument structure unit comprises data corresponding to a hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to grounds that provide a basis for inference of the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to a warrant linking the grounds to the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, and data corresponding to backing that certifies the warrant. The hierarchical argument structure comprises a top level argument structure unit and a plurality of subordinate level argument structure units. Each of the plurality of subordinate argument structure units comprises at least a portion of the grounds of*

the argument structure unit to which it is subordinate. Program code located on each of a plurality of remote computers accepts input from one of a plurality of contributors. Each input comprises data corresponding to an argument structure unit in the hierarchical argument structure and supports the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis. A second programming code is adapted to combine the inputs into a single hierarchical argument structure. A third computer program code is responsive to the second computer program code and is adapted to represent a degree of support for the hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis in the single hierarchical argument structure (col. 6, lines 25-61).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to incorporate into decision support method and medium of Calver the evidence generating taught in Janssen so that arguments being put forth by experts can be effectively captured with the grounds (data with references) upon which conflicting claims of the experts are based and with the claims properly lined to the supporting data so as to aid in making sound policy decision.

Regarding Claims 4 and 22:

Calver discloses a method and system further comprising associating a rationale to each answered template question (pages 7 [0074] industry specific information and resources).

Regarding Claims 3 and 23

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions may be automatically answered by answering the parent's children (The Product Configurator page 5 [0063] –contents of the Product Configurator can be modular, based on responses of the user to previous questions (parent). The Product Configurator dynamically presents the user with new questions (child) based on previous answers (parent)).

Regarding Claims 5 and 24:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein input to one or more of the selected template's questions may be received from a plurality of users over a computer network (page 5 [0059] multiple user interactive sections, Figure 5).

Regarding Claims 6 and 25:

Calver discloses a method and system further comprising allowing one or more of the users to associate comments (recommendations) to at least a portion of the new argument (solution/product (Figure 8 (135-143), page 9 [0098] product and related recommendation).

Regarding Claims 7 and 26:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users (Figure 8 9135-1430 and page 9 [0098]).

Regarding Claims 8 and 27:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template question is a multiple choice question (page 7 [0081] a graphically displayed drop down list or an

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actual number that is compared against *a list or ranges may be graphically displayed* (multiple choice) for the user, page 7 [0082] credit data can be entered by a graphically displayed check list (multiple choice), test entry box or drop down list (multiple choice).

Regarding Claims 9-10 and 28-29:

Calver does not disclose a method and system wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the particular situation have a positive or negative result or wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of answers that partition the likelihood scale

However, it is old and well known to ask provide preferences or degrees of likelihood in the form of multiple choice questions, such as, I agree, I agree somewhat, I disagree, I strongly disagree, It is unlikely, It is probable.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include multiple choice questions which ask to what degree of likelihood with a categorical scale of the likelihood that a particular factor related to a situation would have a positive or negative result since a skilled artisan would have recognized that this practice identifies more specifically what product or service would or would not be most beneficial to a customer's business, best suit the customer's needs and provide the greatest interest and utility to the user.

Regarding Claim 11 and 30:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions may be automatically answered by answering the parent's children (The Product Configurator page 5 [0063] –contents of the Product Configurator can be modular, based on responses of the user to previous questions (parent). The Product Configurator dynamically presents the user with new questions (child) based on previous answers (parent))

Regarding Claims 12 and 31:

Calver discloses a method further comprising providing more than one answer for at least one question (Figure 10 (184-192), page 5 [0057] for the customer the system may provide access to multiple products through one point of contact; allows customers to answer basic questions about products and services)

Regarding Claims 13 and 32:

Calver discloses a method wherein the parent question is automatically answered using a answering technique selected by a user (portal functionality (multiple user interaction sections; page 6 [0069] – while viewing the web based portal homepage, the user may be faced with the option of directly filling out a Pre-Qualified Template questionnaire; page 6 [0070] Product Oriented – if the product orientation format is selected.... Figure 6 and descriptions on page 6 [0068])

Regarding Claims 14 and 33:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein the answering technique *may be* selected from a group consisting of a maximization technique, an averaging technique,

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and a minimization technique (maximization techniques - Figure 13 (236) Management Best Practices- Documentation regarding best practices in small businesses; page 12 {0133}.

Regarding Claims 17 and 36:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein one or more template questions have an associated discovery tool that facilitates answering of such associated template question (pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include, for example, case studies, testimonials, descriptions....and so forth.).

Regarding Claims 18 and 37:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template is associated with a situation descriptors (page 10 [0107] range of categories), the method and system further comprising selecting one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation by comparing a current situation to the situation descriptors associated with the templates to thereby find the most relevant templates having the most closely matching situation descriptors (page 10 [0107] applicant interested in Loans category will find products and services offered by financial providers, Credit category will offer products and services offered by credit providers).

Regarding Claims 19 and 38:

Calver discloses a method and system further comprising creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert (.page 11 [0127] business rules – method and system make decisions and solves problems by using knowledge and rules defined by experts, ie business rules).

Regarding Claims 40:

Calver discloses a computer system operable to access or generate an argument (question based on answer) **having a conclusion** solution/recommendation) for a particular situation (product or service), **the computer system comprising:**

one or more processors (Figure 2(31), page 3 [0040-0041]);

one or more memory (Figure 2 (50)) wherein at least one of the processors and memory are adapted to:

search a plurality of templates for a relevant template most related to a particular situation, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions (Figure 16); and

receive answer one or more questions of the relevant template to form a new argument having a conclusion based on the one or more answers (new questions based on previous answers, page 5[0063]); and

associating supporting evidence to each answered template question (pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include....).

The applicant is advised that Calver discloses a system with processors and memory. The language "adapted for" is generally given little patentable weight in an apparatus/system and thus does not distinguish the system from the prior art. An apparatus/system must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function alone (MPEP 2114). The database and server of Calver are fully capable of performing the functions as set forth in the claim language.

While Calver discloses a customer being presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers [0084], Calver does not explicitly disclose a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers

However, Janssen discloses an invention that provides a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers. *(a program and method for facilitating decision-making, and more particularly, the present invention relates to a computer program, system, and method that accepts inputs that bear on a decision in a structured format from a plurality of sources and arranges the inputs in a hierarchical structure that permits an evaluation of the inputs as they relate to the decision (col. 1, lines 14-20); a system and method that can facilitate decision-making, particularly when the decision-making utilizes for support a large number of sources. It is a further object, to provide a method wherein scientific assessment can be effectively utilized in a decision-making process. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating a decision-making process comprising a computer program that causes*

linkage of data representing a plurality of argument structure units into a hierarchical argument structure. Each argument structure unit comprises data corresponding to a hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to grounds that provide a basis for inference of the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to a warrant linking the grounds to the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, and data corresponding to backing that certifies the warrant. The hierarchical argument structure comprises a top level argument structure unit and a plurality of subordinate level argument structure units. Each of the plurality of subordinate argument structure units comprises at least a portion of the grounds of the argument structure unit to which it is subordinate. Program code located on each of a plurality of remote computers accepts input from one of a plurality of contributors. Each input comprises data corresponding to an argument structure unit in the hierarchical argument structure and supports the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis. A second programming code is adapted to combine the inputs into a single hierarchical argument structure. A third computer program code is responsive to the second computer program code and is adapted to represent a degree of support for the hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis in the single hierarchical argument structure (col. 6, lines 25-61).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to incorporate into decision support system of Calver the evidence generating taught in Janssen so that arguments being put forth by experts can be effectively

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captured with the grounds (data with references) upon which conflicting claims of the experts are based and with the claims properly lined to the supporting data so as to aid in making sound policy decision.

6. Claims 15-16 and 34-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Calver and Janssen as applied to claims 1 and 20 above, and further in view of Grosser.

Regarding Claims 15 and 34:

Neither Calver nor Janssen disclose a method wherein each answer within the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color representing a different answer so that the hierarchical structure's colors convey a line of reasoning.

However, Grosser discloses highlighting the most important sub-decisions (*The computer-aided decision-making system and methods employ a rules-based analysis engine having a plurality of rules for selecting, scoring and ranking a plurality of subchoices. A user interface accepts user-provider information, promotions, and responses to system inquiries for generating reports, proposals and feedback. The invention provides immediate, useful, and relevant information to a person in a decision-making context, overcoming common human cognitive problems that occur in decision-making making, and enabling consumer purchases in an on-line sales environment. In particular, aspects of the invention that aid a person in decision-making include, but are not limited to: managing all the sub-decisions, educating the decision-maker,*

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highlighting the most important sub-decisions, offering the most viable proposals for evaluation, distinguishing significant differences between proposals, supplying various evaluation tools, preventing blind spots, assisting the decision-maker's memory, gauging the progress of the decision process, and learning about the decision maker from the decision process (col. 1, line 61 thru col. 2, line 13).

It would have been obvious to incorporate into the decision support system and method of Calver and Janssen the ability to highlight sub-decisions as taught in Grosser so that the "more preferable" proposals can be quickly identified.

Regarding Claims 16 and 35:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein one or more template questions is associated with a second hierarchical structure of questions and the first and second hierarchical structures together form a set of cascaded arguments (questions) (page 5 [0063] questions based upon answers to above questions).

Response to Arguments

7. Applicant's arguments filed March 15, 2007 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The amended claim language does not provide claim limitations that overcome the rejections of record. There is still no language requiring the computer to somehow use the supporting evidence or even provide the supporting evidence, much less associate the supporting evidence and then generating a new argument supporting an associated conclusion, the argument based on the answers. Furthermore, the Examiner maintains the rejection under 35 USC 112, 1st paragraph.

Applicant states that Calver and Janssen at most teach that questions are posed to the user, wherein the questions are based on the user's answers. The Examiner directs the applicant to applicant's own specification wherein the applicant identifies the invention as follows:

[0010] Accordingly, specific embodiments of the present invention provide an apparatus and method for facilitating decision making. In general terms, the present invention is **based on the concept of a structured argument having a plurality of questions** that are used to assess whether an opportunity or threat of a given type is imminent. **These questions are called the argument's template** (as opposed to the argument, which is an instantiation of the template). In one implementation, the structured argument is based on a hierarchically organized set of questions (e.g., a tree structure).

In response to applicant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the

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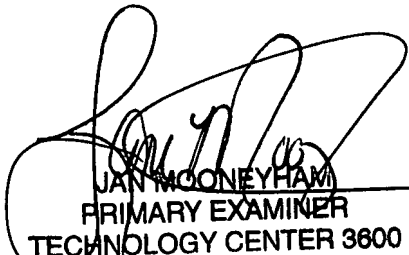
references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992). In this case, the motivation comes from the Jansen reference (col. 6, lines 17-24). Moreover, applicant is directed to *Dystar Textilfarben GMBH & CO Deutschland KG v. C.H. Patrick CO., and Bann Quimica LTDA* (Fed Cir, 06-1088, 10/3/2006) and *KSR INTERNATIONAL CO. v. TELEFLEX INC. ET AL.*

As for applicant's argument that Calver and Janssen fail to disclose or suggest the novel invention of generating a new argument supporting an associated conclusion, the Examiner respectfully disagrees and directs applicant to paragraphs [0060] and [0063] (new questions based on previous answers).

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Janice A. Mooneyham whose telephone number is (571) 272-6805. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Thursday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Weiss can be reached on (571) 272-6812. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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